

**Abstract**

An improved system for sorting mail is described, comprising a sorting machine which uses information collected about each mail item, such as address and size or weight, to map its collection bins to a specified sort order. The sorting machine has, instead of a small number of large sort bins, a large number of small bins. In this way, a small number of mailpieces may be allocated to each bin, for example, each bin may be an individual house or person at a business address. The information about each mail item is achieved by communicating data to the machine before any mail is processed through it. The data may be derived from sensors which scan the mailpiece during the initial phase of the sorting process in conventional sorting systems, or may be supplied by the producer of the mail. The data is configured and transmitted electronically ahead of the physical mail. As the sorting machine is aware of the number, destination and thickness of each mailpiece, it is possible to allocate a sufficient space in the relevant sort bin for each mailpiece. In this way, mail from several sources may be merged as long as the electronic data is written to the machine in advance. As each mailpiece is uniquely identified it is possible to allocate a unique position in the machine to each mailpiece.

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